

The Adventist Leadership Controversy of the 1870s: A Brief Historical Overview¹

Adventism and Adventist History: Sesquicentennial Reflections (January 6, 2014)

Kevin M. Burton
Berrien Springs, MI

Conflict Between Leaders

During the early 1870's James White struggled with four SDA leaders: J. N. Andrews, J. H. Waggoner, Uriah Smith, and G. I. Butler. In March 1873, immediately following the 11th Annual General Conference Session, matters began to intensify, especially with Smith and Butler.² The added stress eventually became too much for White and he suffered another partial stroke on April 22, 1873.³ Lucinda Hall recalled, "His right arm fell powerless . . . and he could not speak at first, but they had a season of prayer and his arm is now nearly as well as before and his speach [sic] immediately restored."⁴ As a result of these and other events, James White admitted that a "crisis has come."⁵

Between May 7-11, 1873, the White's had several meetings with the leaders in Battle Creek to try and straighten out some problems in the *Review* office. G. I. Butler and Uriah Smith were proving to be particularly difficult. According to Ellen White, "Brother Butler and my husband had conversation not very pleasant in reference to matters in the office. Brother Butler is in the dark. He is not viewing matters correctly . . . Brother Butler

¹ This presentation is merely an overview of the major developments that took place during the leadership controversy in the 1870s. For a more complete telling of the story, please see Kevin M. Burton, "Not One Man: The Leadership Controversy of the 1870s," (MA-Religion thesis, Andrews University, forthcoming).

² James S. White to Brother Abbey, May 12, 1873.

³ George W. Amadon, diary entry April 22, 1873, Byington-Amadon Diaries (Collection 12), Center for Adventist Research, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI.

⁴ Lucinda Hall to Samuel and Mary Hall, May 2, 1873.

⁵ James S. White to Brother Abbey, May 12, 1873.

took a firm, unyielding stand, contrary to our views of the condition of things. He was very persistent.” As a result, Ellen White wrote in her diary on May 11, 1873, “My husband is in danger of his life every hour he remains in Battle Creek.” Therefore, the White’s retreated to Potterville, MI that very day in order to rest.⁶

Two days later, G. I. Butler arrived in Potterville with Harmon Lindsay to make a heartfelt apology for his wrongs. According to Ellen White, “Brother Butler confessed his wrong with deep humility of spirit.”⁷ However, while the two men had good intentions, it seems that the added stress of the visit contributed to James White’s second partial stroke within a three-week period.⁸

While Butler did make confessions, other Adventist leaders do not appear to have been as repentant. As a result, Uriah Smith was eventually dismissed from the *Review* office on May 15, 1873. George W. Amadon, wrote in his diary, “This is a dark day in the calendar. Oh my Lord what shall be the end of these wonders[?]”⁹

As General Conference President, G. I. Butler was especially shaken by these events. He admitted to James White, “as hard-hearted a man as I am supposed to be, I have wept over this state of things.”¹⁰ As a result, it became Butler’s primary objective to restore harmony among these four men. Throughout the summer of 1873, G. I. Butler teamed up with S. N. Haskell and they preached on leadership at every camp meeting they attended.

⁶ Ellen G. White, MS 007, 1873, Center for Adventist Research, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ George W. Amadon, diary entry May 15, 1873, Byington-Amadon Diaries (Collection 12), Center for Adventist Research, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI.

¹⁰ George I. Butler to James S. White, October 23, 1873.

By October another idea had developed in Butler's mind. He wrote with hope to James White, "I think the matter of sufficient importance to warrant me as President of the General Conference to summon all four of you [James White, J. H. Waggoner, J. N. Andrews, and Uriah Smith] together to see if something could not be done to get this hindrance out of the way."¹¹ Therefore, a second General Conference Session was called in 1873.

Butler's *Leadership* Essay

The 12th Annual GC Session was called on Friday, November 14, 1873. On Saturday evening (the 15th), G. I. Butler presented his *Leadership* essay. The primary purpose of this essay was to exonerate the work of James White and centralize authority within the office of the General Conference President. However, even though Butler was GC President at this time, he was not trying to grab more power for himself. In fact, Butler believed that James White was the only man fit to lead the church. Throughout the next year, the correspondence between Butler and White illustrates that both men agreed that James White should be in the position of Butler.¹²

The *Leadership* essay essentially equated James White with Moses and other Biblical heroes and Butler cited two of Ellen White's *Testimonies* ("An Appeal for Burden Bearers" and "The Work at Battle Creek") as proof of his claim. After elevating the life and work of James White in this manner, Butler asked the question: "what relation to him [specifically the GC President, and implicitly James White] should those sustain who labor in the same

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² James S. White to George I. Butler, July 13, 1874; c.f. George I. Butler to James S. White, January 23, 1874; George I. Butler to James S. White, February 15, 1874; George I. Butler to James S. White, March 23, 1874; George I. Butler to James S. White, April 2, 1874; George I. Butler to James and Ellen White, May 3, 1874; George I. Butler to James S. White, October 13, 1874.

cause?"¹³ In reply, Butler provided nine primary points. Two of them are especially worthy of note:

4. In all matters of expediency connected with the cause, *to give his judgment the preference*, and cheerfully endeavor to carry it out as fully as though it was our own.

9. To cheerfully admit his authority to reprove and rebuke according to the light God has given him, *and we claim no right to call his exercise of it in question . . . He must have room to exercise this right without question*, so far as his course does not conflict with moral principle.¹⁴

This General Conference Session was a tremendous victory for Butler. In fact, his *Leadership* essay was unanimously voted and adopted as the official Seventh-day Adventist policy on leadership on November 17.¹⁵ J. N. Andrews wrote in the *Review*, "There was perfect unanimity of opinion and of feeling in discussion of this subject."¹⁶ Furthermore, those present at the conference felt that "it was evident that the Spirit of God in an unusual measure was present to bless and guide the meeting."¹⁷

In the weeks and months that followed, it seemed that harmony was indeed restored within the ranks of Sabbath keepers. On November 29, 1873, the congregation of Battle Creek gathered at the meetinghouse and unanimously elected James White to be their pastor even though he was living on the west coast. In addition, over 200 people

¹³ George I. Butler, *Leadership* ([Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press, 1873]), 13.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 13-14.

¹⁵ George W. Amadon, diary entry November 17, 1873, Byington-Amadon Diaries (Collection 12), Center for Adventist Research, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI.

¹⁶ J. N. Andrews, "The General Conference," *RH*, November 18, 1873, 180.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

wrote out their confessions, pledges, and names with a gold pen on a large scroll. Once completed, Uriah Smith dedicated the document and the congregation placed it in a mahogany box along with the gold pen and ink fountain. That box was then fastened to the speaker's stand in the front of the church. These actions were meant to be symbolic, that way, whenever James White stood up to speak within the Battle Creek meetinghouse, that covenant would literally be between him and the people as a visual reminder of their promise to one another.¹⁸ The mood continued to be festive as Uriah Smith finally returned to the *Review* office on the following day.¹⁹

About a month later, Butler's *Leadership* was printed in pamphlet form.²⁰ At the end of the document, J. N. Andrews, J. H. Waggoner, and Uriah Smith (the three other leaders who had major conflicts with James White at this time) heartily gave their endorsement of its contents. As this document was distributed throughout America, the public favor of James White continued to increase. Pastors began preaching sermons on Butler's *Leadership* in their churches²¹ and many Adventists advocated that the new school in Battle Creek should be named "James White College" in his honor.²² However, James White refused and the school took the name Battle Creek College instead.

¹⁸ James White, "Eight Weeks at Battle Creek," *RH*, June 1, 1876, 172.

¹⁹ George W. Amadon, diary entry November 30, 1873, Byington-Amadon Diaries (Collection 12), Center for Adventist Research, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI.

²⁰ See George W. Amadon, diary entry December 19, 1873, Byington-Amadon Diaries (Collection 12), Center for Adventist Research, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI.

²¹ Wolcott H. Littlejohn to Ellen G. White, October 26, 1874.

²² M. E. Olsen, *Origin and Progress of Seventh-day Adventists* (Washington D.C.: Review and Herald, 1925), 337; c.f. Wilbur Arthur Burton, "A History of the Mission of Seventh-day Adventist Education, 1844-1900 (PhD dissertation, Kansas State University, 1987), 164.

James White's "Leadership"

In the midst of all this excitement, Butler began to refer to James and Ellen White as his mother and father.²³ Furthermore, even though he was still president of the General Conference, Butler would no longer make any major decisions without the approval of James White. Butler's essential tone was, "But you [James White] cannot suppose in such things I should act without asking your advice, after all I have said and felt about Leadership . . . Brother White, I value your advice. I would not dare [make any major decision] against your judgment."²⁴

As a result of numerous comments like these, James White quickly became aware of the issues involving Butler's *Leadership* ideas. In early 1874, James White began to write his own article on leadership in response to Butler's claims. At this time, James White appeared to be "the only person who rejected the leading ideas of [Butler's] essay."²⁵

In James White's article on leadership, he claimed:

Organization was designed to secure unity of action, and as a protection from imposture. It was never intended as a scourge to compel obedience, but rather, for the protection of the people of God. Christ does not drive his people. He calls them . . . Church force cannot press the church into one body. This has been tried, and has proved a failure. Christ never designed that human minds should be moulded [sic] for Heaven by the influence merely of other human minds . . . However important organization may be for the protection of the church, and to secure harmony of action, it must not come in to take the disciple from the hands of the great Teacher.²⁶

When the *Signs of the Times* began to be published in California during the summer of 1874, James White's "Leadership" appeared in the first four issues.

²³ George I. Butler to James and Ellen White, December 26, 1873.

²⁴ George I. Butler to James S. White, February 15, 1874.

²⁵ James White, "Leadership," in *The Testimonies to the Church, Nos. 23-25*, Ellen G. White (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press, 1875), 190.

²⁶ James White, "Leadership," *Signs of the Times*, July 9, 1874, 28.

Littlejohn's Leadership Ideas

While James White may have been the first to object to some of Butler's *Leadership* ideas, Wolcott Hackley Littlejohn was the person who objected most vehemently. Although blind, Littlejohn was an adept speaker and writer with impeccable logic. He became fast friends with many of the SDA Leaders, especially G. I. Butler.²⁷ In 1872 these two men traveled across America attending the various camp meetings together, which contributed to their relationship. Unfortunately, as a result of Butler's *Leadership* essay, Butler and Littlejohn's friendship became strained for several years.

Three events then led Littlejohn to start reacting more strongly to Butler's leadership ideas. First, and perhaps most significant, Littlejohn began to lose the little eyesight he had remaining. Although Littlejohn became legally blind in college (no longer able to read or write), Ellen White commented on August 5, 1874, "Brother Littlejohn has been a very sick man. [In o]ne eye, nature has dropped out of her economy and we fear he will lose the other unless God mercifully delivers him."²⁸ Unfortunately, matters did continue to grow worse for Littlejohn and he finally lost sight in his second eye as well. With these health issues, fear seems that have crept into Littlejohn's life, which apparently allowed his judgment to be skewed.²⁹ During this time, he allowed himself to be influenced by other voices that spoke out strongly against the character of James White.

²⁷ C.f. George I. Butler to James S. White, January 24, 1872; George I. Butler to James S. White, August 22, 1872; W. H. Littlejohn to Ellen G. White, October 2, 1872.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ See footnote 75.

A second contributing factor was that James White was again elected General Conference President in 1874. With White again in that prominent position, Littlejohn likely feared his abuse of power. Third, G. I. Butler continued to expound upon his leadership ideas in a sequence of articles titled, "Thoughts on Church Government." This 8-part series concluded on October 13, 1874.³⁰ With Butler's views on leadership becoming more and more prominent within the church, it is no surprise that Littlejohn's letter to Ellen White on October 26, 1874, carried a strong reactionary tone against James White and George Butler.

Littlejohn wrote:

While Bro. W[hite] has many qualities which fit him for successful leadership in a limited degree, he has also qualities, as I think that he, himself will confess, which render it necessary that he should be carefully watched, and boldly opposed whenever it becomes apparent, that he is either, faulty in spirit or mistaken in judgment. This privilege I claim, not only for myself, but also for the humblest Sabbath Keeper in our midst. I shall insist upon the privilege of all to oppose him by voice, or pen, or vote, whenever in their judgment the occasion demands it. I believe that the time has now come, when criticism should be encouraged rather than discouraged. I do not mean by this, that any should indulge [sic] a factious, faultfinding spirit, but that each should assert his individuality before God.³¹

The Leadership Explosion

When James White realized that issues were again arising in Battle Creek, and now Allegan County, he quickly jumped into action. On November 19, 1874, James and Ellen White met with the people in Battle Creek and discussed leadership the entire evening.³²

³⁰ The first article was published in the July 28, 1874, issue of the *Review*.

³¹ Wolcott H. Littlejohn to Ellen G. White, October 26, 1874.

³² George W. Amadon, diary entry November 19, 1874, Byington-Amadon Diaries (Collection 12), Center for Adventist Research, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI.

Also, the decision was made that G. I. Butler and Ellen White would travel to Allegan to try and settle things there, while James White would attend to the matter in Battle Creek.³³

While matters appear to have gone relatively well with James White in Battle Creek, things exploded in the Allegan meetinghouse. Between November 21 and 22, Ellen White, G. I. Butler and his wife, Lenthia, were in Allegan.³⁴ Over that weekend, Butler and Littlejohn had a tremendous clash. Nevertheless, Ellen White, although caught in the middle, clearly saw that neither Butler nor Littlejohn had perfect light on the subject of leadership.

Ellen White wrote:

When Bro. Littlejohn took the course he did in the Allegan meeting-house, I thought if all were not satisfied that his voice was not as the voice of God, they would be left to have still farther evidence of the fact. I felt like making every apology for Bro. Littlejohn. But when he coolly writes me to retract my statement in regard to him, and set him right before his brethren in Allegan and Monterey, I plainly state that I have done nothing I should not have done.³⁵

Against Butler's views on leadership Ellen White claimed, "My burden was not to claim for my husband a leadership like that of Moses."³⁶ She later wrote to Butler, "I have thought I would not address you one line or write to Brother Littlejohn until your position and feelings change. I cannot see the least consistency in the position that either of you have taken. I cannot in the least justify your course and frame any excuse for it."³⁷

³³ C.f. George W. Amadon, diary entry November 21, 1874, Byington-Amadon Diaries (Collection 12), Center for Adventist Research, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI.

³⁴ Ellen G. White to Lucinda Hall, November 23, 1874, Letter H-076, 1874, Center for Adventist Research, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI; c.f. Ellen G. White to The Brethren and Sisters in Allegan and Monterey, December 24, 1874, Letter B-064, 1874, Center for Adventist Research, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ellen G. White to George I. Butler, June 6/8, 1875, Letter B-016, 1875, Center for Adventist Research, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI.

Ellen White's Testimonies

After the explosive meeting in Allegan, Ellen White's first response was to write a letter on Christmas Eve to the churches at Allegan and Monterey.³⁸ In this letter Ellen White made it very clear that she would not retract any of her statements and would not support Littlejohn or Butler in their views. James White also made sure that his article on leadership was published in the *Review*, which ensured that more people could read it.³⁹

On January 3, 1875, God gave Ellen White a vision. In this vision, Ellen White was shown numerous things, including information about the courses of G. I. Butler and W. H. Littlejohn. As a result of this vision, Ellen White wrote two testimonies, one to Littlejohn and one to Butler in mid-January 1875.

To Littlejohn, Ellen White began, "I was shown, Jan. 3, that our dear Brother Littlejohn was going into darkness . . . The word of God will not justify [his] extreme independence. This is one man power indeed which would claim that everything must bend to this one mind, this one will."⁴⁰ Likewise, to Butler, Ellen White wrote, "I have been shown that no man's judgment should be surrendered to the judgment of any one man."⁴¹

³⁸ Ellen G. White to The Brethren and Sisters in Allegan and Monterey, December 24, 1874, Letter B-064, 1874, Center for Adventist Research, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI.

³⁹ James White, "Leadership," *RH*, December 1, 1874. This decision was driven primarily from the fact that the *Signs of the Times* did not have as broad of readership as did the *Review*.

⁴⁰ Ellen G. White, MS 003, 1875, Center for Adventist Research, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI.

⁴¹ Ellen G. White, "Leadership," *Testimony to the Church, No. 25* (Battle Creek, Michigan: Steam Press, 1875), 43.

After this testimony was read to Butler, he immediately resigned all of his public offices. He returned to his home in Iowa with his wife Lenthia on January 14, 1875,⁴² and later worked as an independent minister in Rolla, MO for about seven months.⁴³

The 1875 General Conference Session

1875 was a difficult year for Seventh-day Adventists leaders. While a confession from Butler was printed in the *Review* in February,⁴⁴ he remained greatly upset with James White for opposing him on leadership for several months. On March 29, Butler sent a letter to White, which illustrates that he would no longer refer to James as his father, because he now considered him to be a “regular man.”⁴⁵ Furthermore, since Butler had resigned all public offices, he was no longer active within the leadership of the church. Nevertheless, Butler reassured the readers of the *Review* that he had not abandoned the work entirely. He simply desired “to labor in a new field of tent labor [in Missouri].” In Butler’s mind, this was doubtless “best for the cause and for [himself].”⁴⁶

⁴² George W. Amadon, diary entry January 14, 1875, Byington-Amadon Diaries (Collection 12), Center for Adventist Research, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI.

⁴³ According to G. I. Butler, he “preached at [his] own expense, at a cost of three hundred dollars that year.” G. I. Butler to Irving Keck, May 17, 1905, Albion Fox Ballenger, Edward S Ballenger, and Donald E Mote Papers, Collection 87, Box 10, Folder 16, Center for Adventist Research, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI.

⁴⁴ George I. Butler, “A Confession,” *RH*, February 25, 1875, 70-71.

⁴⁵ George I. Butler to James S. White, March 29, 1875.

⁴⁶ G. I. Butler, “The Coming Camp-Meetings,” *RH*, May 27, 1875, 174.

In June, W. H. Littlejohn had stopped attending the Seventh-day Adventist church in Allegan and blamed Ellen White for his decision.⁴⁷ James White also became discouraged and informed the readers of the *Review* that he wished to resign as GC President and vowed to never allow himself to be pressed into office again as he claimed he was in August 1874.

SDA leaders were growing desperate and continually tried to bring about resolution. As a result, it was decided on July 14, 1875, “to hold a ‘Council’ Aug. 4-11 [in Battle Creek].”⁴⁸ While some referred to this event as a council, other Adventists called it a trial or “investigation.”⁴⁹ George W. Amadon however gave these meetings the most grandiose name by referring to it as the “Celebrated Littlejohn Trial.”⁵⁰ In actuality, the meetings were like a trial, council and investigation. However, Littlejohn was not the only one to be put on trial or investigated. In fact, in spite of being sick Ellen White “was called in and [had to] answer to the charges of contradiction in [the] Testimonies.”⁵¹ This event was terribly disturbing to Ellen White and she didn’t sleep well during its entirety. In addition to the stress, some of these meetings lasted until about midnight, which naturally drained her

⁴⁷ Seventh-day Adventist Church of Allegan, MI, “Record Book, 1861-1879,” pp. 76, 86-87, Center for Adventist Research, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI; Ellen G. White to William C. White, August 8, 1875, Letter W-029, 1875, Center for Adventist Research, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI.

⁴⁸ George W. Amadon, diary entry July 14, 1875, Byington-Amadon Diaries (Collection 12), Center for Adventist Research, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI.

⁴⁹ Ellen G. White to William C. White, August 8, 1875, Letter W-029, 1875, Center for Adventist Research, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI.

⁵⁰ George W. Amadon, diary entry August 5, 1875, Byington-Amadon Diaries (Collection 12), Center for Adventist Research, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI.

⁵¹ Ellen G. White to William C. White, August 8, 1875, Letter W-029, 1875, Center for Adventist Research, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI.

weary body.⁵² Littlejohn was especially harsh and accusatory of Ellen White. Nevertheless, Ellen White continued to answer his accusations until her “voice was about gone through hoarseness.”⁵³ Eventually, as the trial progressed, a vote was taken and all but Brothers “Littlejohn, [Donald] Warren and Charlie Russel [sic]” stood with the Whites.⁵⁴

The 1875 General Conference Session began the day after the trial ended. Interestingly enough, while G. I. Butler put forth a motion to have his *Leadership* revoked, James White objected and suggested that it be given into the hands of a committee for further evaluation. As a result, during the second session of the GC, it was voted to have Butler’s *Leadership* tract placed “in the hands of a committee... to be so revised as to correspond with the better understanding which now exists on the subject of Leadership.”⁵⁵ At the third session, the General Conference then voted to appoint Uriah Smith, Sydney Brownsberger, and John Harvey Kellogg as the committee to revise the Leadership tract.⁵⁶

The following day, on August 17, a special group of men met to discuss the leadership issue with George I. Butler. At this meeting two important resolutions were passed (among others): First, “That we cannot so interpret the testimony given by Sister White to Brother Butler, as to justify the course he has taken, in withdrawing himself from

⁵² C.f. George W. Amadon, diary entry August 7, 1875, Byington-Amadon Diaries (Collection 12), Center for Adventist Research, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI.

⁵³ Ellen G. White to William C. White, August 8, 1875, Letter W-029, 1875, Center for Adventist Research, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Uriah Smith, “Proceedings of the Fourteenth Annual Session of the S. D. Adventist General Conference,” *RH*, August 26, 1875, 59.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

important positions in this work." Second, "That we recommend that Brother Butler immediately visit Allegan County, to help affected brethren there, and that we pray that he may have the help and blessing of God in the undertaking."⁵⁷ After this meeting, Butler seemed to turn a corner. In the August 26 issue of the *Review* James White exclaimed, "We were all made joyful to see Elder Butler moving out from his trials at the close of the General Conference."⁵⁸

Littlejohn's Disfellowship

In spite of this, by January 1876 things were reaching their breaking point in Allegan. On January 2, the Allegan congregation voted to remove Littlejohn's bell from the meetinghouse. Naturally this was upsetting to some of the members.⁵⁹ To make matters worse, W. H. Littlejohn and Horatio S. Lay (who had since sided with Littlejohn) had been holding rival meetings in Allegan, which caused much disturbance among the Adventist congregation.⁶⁰ As a result of these events, the break finally occurred. W. H. Littlejohn, Horatio S. Lay, and Donald Warren were disfellowshipped (along with some others) on

⁵⁷ "Transcription of minutes of GC sessions from 1863 to 1888," in AdventistArchives.org, accessed December 2, 2013, <http://www.adventistarchives.org>, 90-1.

⁵⁸ James White, "The Camp-Meetings," *RH*, August 26, 1875, 64.

⁵⁹ Seventh-day Adventist Church of Allegan, MI, "Record Book, 1861-1879," p. 82, Center for Adventist Research, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI.

⁶⁰ C.f. Seventh-day Adventist Church of Allegan, MI, "Record Book, 1861-1879," pp. 76, 86-87, 94, Center for Adventist Research, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI; James S. White to William C. White, May 7, 1876.

January 27, 1876.⁶¹ The very next day, this schism within the Adventist church was broadcast as “State News” in some Michigan newspapers.⁶²

In January 1876, a new person began trying to help resolve the issue in Allegan—Dudley Marvin Canright. Canright held meetings in Allegan, Otsego, and Monterey in January and February 1876 to investigate the situation in those churches. Therefore, in addition to those disfellowshipped at Allegan, Canright and those at Monterey decided to also censure the course of George T. Lay, who had sided with Littlejohn and his younger brother Horatio.⁶³ According to G. T. Lay, James White was “an overbearing and tyrannical man” who crushed “out the rights and privileges of all our people.”⁶⁴ Furthermore, he agreed with Littlejohn that James White was putting thousands of dollars into his own pocket from the donations raised by the people.⁶⁵

After these meetings in Allegan County, another special session of the General Conference was called in March 1876. One of the items on the agenda was for Canright to give a report on his investigations throughout Michigan. According to Canright, all of Michigan was again unified except for Allegan County.⁶⁶ Apparently, the people of Battle Creek had all of their questions answered during the Celebrated Littlejohn Trial that took place in August 1875.

⁶¹ Seventh-day Adventist Church of Allegan, MI, “Record Book, 1861-1879,” pp. 76, 86-87, 94, Center for Adventist Research, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI

⁶² “State News,” *Otsego (MI) Weekly Union*, January 28, 1876, p. 4, col. 3.

⁶³ Seventh-day Adventist Church of Monterey, MI, “Record Book, 1860-1880,” p. 120, Center for Adventist Research, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI.

⁶⁴ Dudley M. Canright to James S. White, February 21, 1876.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ “Transcription of minutes of GC sessions from 1863 to 1888,” in AdventistArchives.org, accessed December 2, 2013, <http://www.adventistarchives.org>, 93.

At some point in May 1876, things apparently started to change. The White's visited Allegan several times in order to meet with Littlejohn, which was very helpful for him.⁶⁷ As a result, Littlejohn's mind began to turn and he started to feel somewhat more favorable towards the Adventist movement. As early as May 7, 1876, "it [was] surmised that Littlejohn would come back."⁶⁸

Healing Can Happen

In the winter and spring of 1877, the church of Monterey began to make giant strides to resolve the problems in their church. Between January 11-14, a series of meetings were conducted by S. N. Haskell, which proved to be very successful.⁶⁹ Four months later, the Monterey church held another series of meetings and officially reorganized their church on April 14, 1876.⁷⁰

While Monterey progressed, Allegan continued to falter. James White continued to bear much of the stress and by late August his health was again in jeopardy. On September 8, 1877, the church at Battle Creek declared a fast on account of James White's health. The

⁶⁷ C.f. Ellen G. White to William C. White, July 20, 1875, Letter W-025, 1875, Center for Adventist Research, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI; Ellen G. White to James S. White, May 6, 1876, Letter W-022, 1876, Center for Adventist Research, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI; George W. Amadon, diary entry July 14, 1876, Byington-Amadon Diaries (Collection 12), Center for Adventist Research, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI; James S. White to William C. White, July 15, 1876.

⁶⁸ James S. White to William C. White, May 7, 1876

⁶⁹ Seventh-day Adventist Church of Monterey, MI, "Record Book, 1860-1880," pp. 123-126, Center for Adventist Research, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI.

⁷⁰ Seventh-day Adventist Church of Monterey, MI, "Record Book, 1860-1880," pp. 128-130, 266-267, Center for Adventist Research, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI.

day was filled with personal testimonies and prayer and according to Amadon, it was a “very profitable day for the church in many respects.”⁷¹

By September 20, the day that the 16th Annual GC Session began, James White appeared to be in better health. About a week later, at the fourth session of the conference a major decision was made that finally brought about some restoration within the church. On September 28, the General Conference voted to rescind all aspects of Butler’s Leadership that referred to one-man leadership. Immediately after that, James White made the motion to have W. H. Littlejohn restored to the church. Littlejohn happily and humbly agreed and the motion passed.⁷²

By this time, Littlejohn had had a complete change of heart. The very night the General Conference ended, Littlejohn told Ellen White that he was going to return to Allegan to “work among those he [had] helped in darkness.”⁷³ Ellen White wrote to her son, James Edson, “I know that Littlejohn would never have taken the course he has done had it not been for his blindness and the reports of others that were false; but the Lord is very merciful to the afflicted and I have ever believed he would come out right.”⁷⁴

On October 6, the very next Sabbath, Littlejohn was restored to the church of Allegan. A week later, Littlejohn was again preaching in Allegan, trying to amend the damages he had caused. Throughout the next year, Littlejohn proved true to his word. On

⁷¹ George W. Amadon, diary entry September 8, 1877, Byington-Amadon Diaries (Collection 12), Center for Adventist Research, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI.

⁷² James White and A. B. Oyen, “Sixteenth Annual Session of the General Conference of S. D. Adventists,” *RH*, October 4, 1877, 106.

⁷³ Ellen G. White to Children, Edson and Emma, September 28, 1877, Letter W019, 1877, Center for Adventist Research, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

nearly every Sabbath, from October 1877 to October 1878, Littlejohn preached and ministered somewhere in Michigan, particularly in Allegan County.⁷⁵ Furthermore, Littlejohn visited those who would not attend these meetings in their own homes.

Conclusion

After almost a decade of struggles, the Leadership crisis was finally resolved. While there are multiple lessons that can and should be learned from this history, there is not time to expound upon them here. However, one point must be mentioned—healing can happen. Hurt and pain exist in this world, even in our local congregations. Nevertheless, even through the most difficult struggles, God will guide us if we fully rely on Him and work as ministers of reconciliation.

⁷⁵ H. M. Kenyon, "Michigan," *RH*, October 25, 1877, 134; M. S. Burnham, "Allegan County," *RH*, November 29, 1877, 174; W. H. Littlejohn and M. S. Burnham, "Michigan: Labor Among the Churches," *RH*, December 6, 1877, 182; W. H. Littlejohn, "Michigan," *RH*, January 3, 1878, 6; "Michigan: Allegan County," *ST*, January 10, 1878, 13; Seventh-day Adventist Church of Monterey, MI, "Record Book, 1860-1880," pp. 131ff., Center for Adventist Research, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI; Wolcott H. Littlejohn to Ellen G. White, December 17, 1877; W. H. Littlejohn and M. S. Burnham, "Michigan: Labor Among the Churches," *RH*, January 24, 1878, 30; W. H. Littlejohn and M. S. Burnham, "Michigan: Labor Among the Churches," *RH*, January 31, 1878, 38; Wolcott H. Littlejohn to Ellen G. White, January 22, 1878; W. H. Littlejohn and M. S. Burnham, "Michigan," *RH*, February 21, 1878, 62; W. H. Littlejohn and M. S. Burnham, "Michigan: Labor Among the Churches," *RH*, March 7, 1878, 78; W. H. Littlejohn and M. S. Burnham, "Michigan: Labor Among the Churches," *RH*, May 16, 1878, 158; "Michigan: Labor Among the Churches," *ST*, May 23, 1878, 157; W. H. Littlejohn, "Dedication at Lakeview, Mich.," *RH*, May 30, 1878, 173; W. H. Littlejohn, "Michigan: Allegan and Douglas," *RH*, August 15, 1878, 62; "Michigan: Allegan and Douglas," *ST*, August 22, 1878, 253.